



TENNESSEE - BULGARIA

1993-2013



President: Rosen Plevneliev
 Prime Min.: Boyko Borisov
 MoD: Anyu Angelov
 Amb. to US: Elena Poptodorova
 US Amb: Marcie Berman Ries
 TAG: MG Terry M. Haston

NATO member: Yes (2004)

EU member: Yes (2007)

ISAF Pax: 58I (1/1/13)

2012 SPP Engagements: 8

Population: 4.6M (2012 est.)
 Area: slightly smaller than S. Carolina
 Military Expend.: 1.4% GDP (2010 est.)



Photo by U.S. Air Force

Overview

The Republic of Bulgaria signed a bilateral affairs agreement with the U.S. Department of Defense and the state of Tennessee in 1993 establishing the Tennessee-Bulgaria State Partnership Program. Tennessee and Bulgaria were paired because they shared similar geographical and cultural features. During these years, Tennessee and Bulgaria have literally exchanged hundreds of soldiers on travelling contact teams and familiarization visits covering variety of topics with respect to military operations and civil-military relationships, more than **420** events have been executed since the inception of the program. Tennessee National Guard soldiers have also participated in major military exercises in Bulgaria sponsored by U.S. Air Force in Europe and U.S. Army, Europe like Cornerstone, Bulwark; Sentry Lion etc. It should be mentioned that many Bulgarian villages have been influenced in a positive way by this partnership through many Humanitarian Assistance initiatives in conjunction with Mil-to-Mil interaction.

Joint Contact teams continue to mature after Bulgaria's accession into NATO in 2004, EUCOM, Tennessee, and Bulgaria wanted to explore moving to the next step of complexity in engagement activities with respect to the State Partnership Program. The events that EUCOM proposed were to be the first time Tennessee National Guard units were to conduct their annual training in Bulgaria independent of a larger exercise. Several major SPP events need to be highlighted which have impacted either side in a significant way. Vigilant Sentry is an exercise which combined efforts of both the 118th TN Medical group, and the 168th Military Police Battalion. The Medical part objectives' were to provide medical, dental and pediatric care to the rural population in a joint effort with the Bulgarian Ministry of Defense and through the Military Academy and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health. Sentry Lion is another interesting event which took place in 2006 at the third Bulgarian AF base at Graf Ignatievo. In this event the TN Air Guard provided C-5 Cargo Transports to move the logistical equipment and support personnel from Oregon to Bulgaria.

Partnership History

On August 13, 1993, the Sofia daily newspaper reported that: "from well informed sources in the midst of the Ministry of Defense, Duma has learned that four unidentified American Specialists have been roaming about Sofia for about 10 days. Without the approval of the government and not known by whose invitation, the guest with US epaulets are staying in the capital's hotel Shipka. What are they doing here is not fully clear". This was the inception of the Military Liaison team in Bulgaria, and the first members of the liaison team arrived in Bulgaria in late July 1993. As elsewhere, the liaison team's first task upon arrival was to develop a country work plan. Much patience was required on the part of the Americans to overcome the obstacles and complete the first work plan. The transparency of the contact program and repeated demonstrations of American intention to respond to priorities set by the host nation were the keys to this effort. The plan, completed in November 1993, contained a list of the 16 events, a plan for the next quarter consisting of 44 events, and a yearly work plan of 15 core events. Although the contact program was not able to conduct all of the events during the first quarter, the staff did schedule most of them during the remainder of 1994. This is how everything started and evaluated to the extent where the partners' efforts are constant throughout the years and aim at achieving higher and higher levels of interoperability and mutual trust and understanding.

Notable accomplishments:

- More than 420 events executed since 1993
- 31 SPP events executed since Fiscal year 2009
- 4 Operational Mentor and Liaison Team rotations
- Military Police NATO Combat Readiness Evaluation
- Enriched military experiences and adopting new military concepts for both sides
- The Bulgarian Armed Forces realized the importance of the NCOs' and started implementing new policies empowering the NCOs with a greater responsibility



Photo by Capt. Elizabeth Culbertson



"The State Partnership Program has offered the opportunity to forge a relationship that fosters democracy, encourages economic development, and promotes regional capability and stability that I would not have thought possible." - MG Gus Hargett Jr., former Adjutant General, Tennessee National Guard

FY2012 Highlights

10 SPP events were executed in 2012:

- The Adjutant General Visit-visit of the TN Adjutant General to Bulgaria
- Crew Resources Management
- Combat Readiness Evaluation staff training
- Pre-Deployment Preparation
- Airdrop Procedures
- Bulgarian Ministry of Defense Senior Enlisted Visit
- Air Operations Center Introduction and Operations
- Non Commissioned Officers Visit to TN Air Force Bases
- Culture and Language Proficiency Program event including an ADVON visit as well



Partnership Focus

The following are EUCOM stated areas of focus for the Tennessee-Bulgaria partnership:

- Foster national stability within NATO framework
- Increase Bulgarian coalition contribution through Bulgarian Battle Group
- Put the stress on Military Police events and interaction
- More culture and language proficiency program rotations
- Leadership & Noncommissioned officers developments
- Emergency management & disaster response



ISAF Cooperation and OMLT Teams

The Tennessee-Bulgaria State Partnership Program has accomplished a great deal in just 20 years. One of the most fruitful and unique initiatives is the so-called OMLT (Operational Mentor and Liaison Team). Those rotations are part of the SPP portfolio. Its main objective was to bring together American and Bulgarian militaries and to train together spreading out their knowledge to their Afghans counterparts. There were the total of three Garrison OMLT rotations from 2009 to 2011, and one C55 OMLT. The initial trainings took place in the National Military University in the town of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria and then continued in the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany. JMRC conducts several OMLT rotations each year, training multinational partners to ensure they are prepared for rotation to Afghanistan with the ability to train, advise and enable the Afghan National Army while possessing skills to survive on the battlefield. The Bulgarians have accomplished their objectives in ISAF – lead Core Training through executing different type of classes, such as: IED training, M16 range, ANA doctrine, Log planning, CFF and CAS that were very useful for them. Different types of TTPs were rehearsed during those OMLT rotations, many valuable skills have been acquired during this interaction such as TSPs, reacting to ambushes, patrol drills, vehicle rollover training procedures, IED trainings, CAS, MEDEVAC, call for fire.



One of the major engagements through SPP was the Bulgarian contingent in Afghanistan which consisted of 474 military personnel. They were involved in a wide range of military activities such as: mechanized company embedded into Italian Battle Group (Kabul) – 122 military personnel. The major tasks were patrolling and security of Invicta base and Kabul Airport; Security (guarding) platoon – 45 military personnel (protection of Waterhouse base and escort of logistical elements); recon team – (5 people); team for ATC of Kabul airport (2 people); medical team (5 people) – embedded into the French military hospital; guarding company – 266 military personnel (protection and patrolling in the area of Kandahar airport); Bulgarian – US OMLT – Kandahar – 7 Bulgarian military personnel; 2 Medical teams (10 people) – embedded into the Spanish military hospital in Herat; two military personnel in the Hungarian PRT. In March 2009 the Bulgarians were withdrawn from that team.